

WORSHIP JANUARY 10th 2021

WELCOME

Today is the first Sunday of Epiphany, which according to the dictionary means, “a moment of sudden and great reevaluation or realisation”. Or in the Christian tradition refers to the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles, which of course is a specific revelation.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, arise and shine, make known your Holy Spirit to us. For Spirit of God you descended like a dove, at the baptism of Jesus, so now anoint and unite your Church with your life giving and affirming presence and give us new birth by your Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

HYMN: Blessed Assurance Jesus is Mine.

READINGS

GENESIS 1:1-5 **The Beginning**

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

ACTS 19:1-7 **Paul in Ephesus**

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?” “John’s baptism,” they replied. Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” On hearing this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.

MARK 1 :4-11

And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem

went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptised by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

REFLECTION

Our reading from Genesis reminds us that the Holy Spirit has been active since the beginning of time, hovering over the waters. In the Hebrew she is Rouache, the feminine principle of God. We come upon her again in the Old Testament as Wisdom. In Mark we read about her descending like a dove upon Jesus at his baptism, and in Acts we see Paul baptising for a second time the twelve who receive the Holy Spirit.

So, what does this tell us? For one I think it says something about that even if we are baptised from childhood or later we may also need to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We may have already received this, I know I have, and I will tell you a little about this later.

But why do we need this baptism of the Holy Spirit? I believe it is for many reasons. To heal us of past hurts, to empower us to do even greater things than Jesus did, as he tells us in John chapter 12 and be powerful witnesses building His Kingdom, co-creators as the spirit works through us for this broken world.

So how do I know I am filled with the spirit? Well, I had a defining moment where Jesus appeared to me as I boarded a bus. I was literally headed in the wrong direction for my life. I was setting out to a New Age place to study psychic healing. As I boarded that bus Jesus appeared to me and I knew in my very being it was Him and that no one else could see him but me. I got off the bus at the train station and wanted to buy a ticket to Foress in Scotland but all that would come out of my mouth as I stood at the ticket office was, "a single to Whitley Bay" in other words back home. I sat on the railway station that early Sunday morning convinced I was having some kind of nervous breakdown. Jesus sat with me and as I began to cry. I looked up and there was a lady getting on a train, she looked so peaceful, and had a cross at least 12 inches large hanging around her neck. I thought to myself, "well whatever she has I want". At this moment Jesus disappeared and I got on my first train home. On this almost empty train a nun came and sat opposite me, she never said a word! Changing to my second train, two vicars sat opposite me, neither said a word! After several hours I arrived back home in Whitley Bay feeling tired and dejected wondering what I had just done. The phone rang and it was a Christian friend asking me if I would like to meet her at a local church which was having a service of healing and wholeness. I thought I might as well go along as I was interested in healing. Arriving at the church a few minutes later I opened the vestibule door and as I stepped into the church, I was flooded with golden light that poured and poured and poured washing my soul clean and filling me with what I later came to understand was the HOLY SPIRIT and I began to

pray in a strange language which I later learnt was tongues, something I had never heard of.

This did not happen to me because I was somehow more special than others. I believe there were two important factors that contributed to this experience. The first was several months before, I would not have called myself a Christian, in fact I was suspicious of Christians, rather someone who believed there was something greater than mere human beings. However, my Christian friend took me to a Midnight Mass one New Year's Eve and as I came out, I said what was my first genuine prayer, "Well if you're there God, you can have me". And I meant it even though I was not sure there was such a God who cared about me! The second factor is that a group of women began to pray for me, even though they did not know me, they were called Women of God.

And what God did for me in that defining transforming moment will take too long to speak of today. But he began to heal my broken soul and put right so many things in my life, beginning with giving me five beautiful mothers in God who guided my early Christian life.

This was over thirty-five years ago and there have been many miracles in between, the not least of which is that I stand before you today. The young woman who had no time for Church or Christianity is now here a Priest with a heart to serve you and God's Kingdom, a Christian, and would have it no other way.

So, let us open our hearts, pray for one another that God will fill us and others afresh with his Holy Spirit, that we may serve and be part of healing our hurting world and building God's Kingdom in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Holy God we give you thanks for all who are baptised, and those who have been baptised in this place. We thank you for our own baptism and pray that we may know we are always immersed in your presence. Fill us afresh with this knowledge.

**COME HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD
COME AFRESH UPON YOUR PEOPLE.**

We pray for justice and healing for all nations and remember especially those who are held hostage or suffer for their faith. We pray for all who are slaves to debt or work, and that the world banks may seek to deal justly with the nations of this world.

**COME HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD
COME AFRESH UPON YOUR PEOPLE.**

We give thanks for all those who work for all our wellbeing, refresh and restore them. We pray for our loved ones, families and friends, our neighbours and our work colleagues. In the quiet of our hearts we lift to you those known to us who need your healing grace.....

**COME HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD
COME AFRESH UPON YOUR PEOPLE.**

We pray for all who are weary, worried or anxious, all who are ill in body, mind or spirit. Come refresh and heal your people. We pray that your spirit will pour afresh upon your Church and we your people will be anointed and overflowing with your Holy Spirit that we may be active agents in bringing your Kingdom grace to a hurting world.

**COME HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD
COME AFRESH UPON YOUR PEOPLE. Amen.**

HYMN: AMAZING GRACE

PEACE

The Lord gives strength to his people, the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace. The peace of the Lord be always with you. **AND ALSO WITH YOU**

BLESSING

May God the creator uphold you, Christ the redeemer enfold you, and the Holy Spirit comfort and fill you. And the blessings of God the Father Son and Holy Spirit be with you and those you love now and always. **Amen**